

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 218 793

EA 014 821

AUTHOR Smorodin, Calla; And Others
TITLE Point of View: A Critical Variable in Program Development and Program Evaluation.
PUB DATE Apr 81
NOTE 15p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (Los Angeles, CA, April 13-17, 1981).
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Agency Cooperation; *Attitudes; Case Studies; Community Resources; *Consumer Education; Consumer Protection; Cooperative Programs; Educational Cooperation; *Educational Objectives; Elementary Secondary Education; Evaluation Criteria; Institutional Cooperation; *Program Development; *Program Evaluation
IDENTIFIERS *Saint Louis City School District MO

ABSTRACT

A case study of the Urban Consumer Education Project (UCEP)--a cooperative program of the St. Louis (Missouri) public schools and the Missouri Attorney General's Division of Consumer Protection--shows how point of view can shape a project's development and evaluation. "Point of view" here means knowing what one wants to do and how and why one wants to do it. UCEP gave teachers and community resource persons inservice training in teaching consumer skills to students and integrated the community's consumer resources into schools' instructional programs. UCEP's point of view was that consumers have rights and responsibilities, both codified in statutes. From the project director's standpoint, UCEP's point of view brought the cooperating agencies together and affected all parts of project design, including advisory board selection, materials development, and classroom activities. From the project evaluator's standpoint, UCEP's point of view generated the criteria for measuring project effectiveness, allowed the creation of a consistent curriculum, focused teachers' and resource persons' inservice training and improved their instructional skills, facilitated assessment of UCEP's impact, and reduced the usual curriculum change problems by making UCEP's curriculum understandable to teachers. (Author/RW)

* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *

ED218793

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION
CENTER (ERIC)

X This document has been reproduced as
received from the person or organization
originating it.

Minor changes have been made to improve
reproduction quality.

- Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS
MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Calla Smorodin

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES
INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

POINT OF VIEW: A CRITICAL VARIABLE
IN PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT AND PROGRAM EVALUATION

By:

Calla Smorodin
St. Louis Public Schools and
St. Louis University

Gail Marshall
St. Louis Public Schools and
Washington University

Thomas Brooks
St. Louis Public Schools

Presented to:

American Educational Research Association
Los Angeles, California

April, 1981

EA 014 821

POINT OF VIEW: A CRITICAL VARIABLE
IN PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT AND PROGRAM EVALUATION

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this paper is to examine how a critical variable, which we call point of view, affects the development, initiation, and evaluation of an educational innovation. The paper presents a case study of an innovative project, the Urban Consumer Education Project, and examines how the point of view of the curriculum developer helped determine the project's development and initiation into the school system, and also how the evaluation was shaped by the developer's point of view.

Educational innovations have had a chequered history. In a classic description of educational innovations, Berman, et al. (1975) have presented data on the impediments to implementation. Their survey of the implementation of several major projects (Right to Read, Bilingual Education, etc.) shows that the impediments to implementation are systematic and widespread. Our own experience with an implementation effort tells us, however, that there are facilitating factors as well as impeding factors. Among the most critical is "point of view"--i.e. knowing what you want to do, knowing how you want to do it, and knowing why you want to do it. While the point may seem obvious, our experience in directing and evaluating projects has shown us that the obvious

is often the most neglected facet of the development-initiation-evaluation process or the most difficult to pin down.

THE URBAN CONSUMER EDUCATION PROJECT: A CASE STUDY IN POINT OF VIEW

From the Director's Side:

The Urban Consumer Education Project is a cooperative program between the St. Louis Public Schools' Law and Education Project and the Missouri Attorney General's Division of Consumer Protection. With two-year funding from the U.S. Office of Consumers' Education, the project developed a model for training teachers in a consumer education program and integrating the community's consumer resources into the school program.

The model evolved over the two-year span of the project as a result of rigorous formative evaluation. It has been demonstrated to be an effective mechanism for implementing consumer education in the St. Louis Public Schools. Students showed dramatic gains in cognitive knowledge and also in consumer skill knowledge. Moreover, students have demonstrated growth in their ability to apply acquired knowledge to real issues of day-to-day consumer practice.

The model was designed to utilize the leadership of the state's chief legal officer, the Attorney General, to identify and assemble the consumer resources which serve the urban community. It was designed to train teachers in ways to integrate these community resources into the school's instructional program.

Description of the Model: The model combined components of two systems--teacher inservice and program administration. The training program and the administrative design can each stand alone as effective educational mechanisms.

Combined they result in a model which is particularly useful for consumer education in an urban setting because they provide the structure for a school-community impact which translates into interactive training and practically-based lessons and teaching strategies.

The training program was designed to provide teachers with methods and techniques for teaching consumer education skills and concepts to their students. In addition, teachers were trained in the utilization of community resources in the classroom. The training program gave teachers necessary and timely feedback and allowed project-level choices to be made to correct errors and to encourage commitment to the project. Built into the training program were several activities identified by Berman et al. (1975) as effective strategies for successful implementation. These included:

1. concrete specific-to-teacher extended training programs
2. classroom assistance
3. project meetings that focus on practical problems
4. teacher participation in project decisions
5. local materials development

Berman et al. have discussed the import of these strategies and we have found them to be useful on the local scene.

The second component of the model -- the administrative design -- was based on interagency cooperation and had as its purpose the integration and utilization of community resources into the school instructional program. The administrative design represented an administrative support system which brought community resources into the schools' instructional program, and at the same time, did not compromise the legal organizational structure of a school or its mandated authority to govern. The administrative support system had the

following functions:-

1. to inventory available resources in the community
2. to implement the delivery of resources to teachers and students
3. to devise strategies which integrate resources into the instructional program and maximize their educational benefit
4. to provide inservice training to teachers in the use of community resources
5. to provide training to resource persons in innovative classroom techniques
6. to monitor the quality of resources and insure individual expertise
7. to provide ongoing maintenance and development of the resource pool.

The model utilized inter-agency cooperation in two ways. First, the program was administered cooperatively by the St. Louis Public Schools and the Missouri Attorney General's Office. Programmatic decisions were made jointly and a staff consisting of personnel from both organizations carried out the work of the project. A second feature of the project's utilization of inter-agency cooperation was the Advisory Board. This Board identified and assembled the resources available in the community and were instrumental in their delivery into the school program. It is the point of view, however, which has important implications for the substance of the project. The point of view represents the philosophy at the foundation of the project and it is from this theoretical base that the project's criteria for success emerges.

In the Urban Consumer Education Project, for example, the project was based on the point of view that the consumer has rights and responsibilities in the marketplace. Further, that many of the consumer's rights and responsibilities are codified by statute. Rights and responsibilities became

the criteria by which project decisions were made--and also the criteria by which success (or failure) was assessed.

This was seen, for example, in the initial stages of project development. It was the rights and responsibilities point of view which brought together the Director of the St. Louis Public Schools' Law and Education Project and the Attorney General's Chief Counsel in charge of Consumer Protection. Together, they planned a consumer education program with a rights and responsibilities approach.

Rights and responsibilities was a constant factor in all aspects of project design--the composition of the Advisory Board, the training program for teachers and resource persons, the substance of classroom activities.

An important step in program development was the creation of the Advisory Board which supplies the resource persons who are trained in the program and make presentations in classrooms. A list was drawn up of local agencies and organizations to be invited to serve on the Advisory Board. A single criterion was used for generating the list--did the organization focus on the rights and responsibilities aspect of consumer education? Among the 40 business, civic, governmental and educational organizations and agencies represented on the Advisory Board, there was a common thread that unified their approach; i.e., their consumer education activities included (and in some cases, consisted of) a rights and responsibilities point of view.

Similarly, in the workshops and on-site classroom activities which made up the training program, it was the point of view which gave the project director the criteria for designing the training process. Because there was an explicit point of view, the evaluator was able to participate in ongoing assessment of the training program from a substantive aspect and provide the project director with important formative data.

Nowhere is the impact of point of view more dramatic than in the development of materials and activities for the classroom. In the Urban Consumer Education Project, teachers worked with resource persons to develop classroom activities to be taught by the teacher/resource person partnership. Again, it was the point of view which provided focus and direction for the development of the classroom activities. Twenty-two lessons were developed, each to be taught cooperatively by the teacher and resource person, and each focusing on some aspect of consumer rights and responsibilities. Thus, point of view established the topic area of each lesson and generated the criteria by which their effectiveness could be measured.

Point of view was extremely helpful to resource persons who, in the course of their daily work, often are active in a much wider spectrum of activities. The Urban League, for example, turned its classroom focus toward teaching the student to be an assertive consumer. The police département developed a lesson on shoplifting, stressing not only that shoplifting is a crime, but that it leads to higher costs for the consumer. The tax-subsidized bus company designed a lesson on vandalism, emphasizing the dollar cost to replace a bus seat and emphasizing that as taxpayers, we all must bear the cost of vandalism.

Point of view thus provided a focus for the organization which has a broader outlook than consumer protection. It proved valuable also to those organizations which have specific consumer protection functions, such as the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, the U.S. Postal Inspector, and the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission. Point of view provided direction to these groups by helping focus their lessons on the skills and concepts associated with rights and responsibilities and not on particular products or substances.

From the Evaluator's Side:

In a discussion of the Kettering Art Project, Walker (1975) says that his own study of curriculum development showed him that "the logical essence of curriculum development is practical reasoning" (p. 132) and he went on to say that one aspect of rationality is shown when the merits of curriculum design are considered at the onset of project development.

The Urban Consumer Education Project gave examples of the rationality Walker discussed through the point of view adopted by the Project--consumer rights and responsibilities. At some level of consciousness, early in the Project's development period, the directors addressed several issues which they felt to be important and which had profound implications for all subsequent activities--the selection of resource agencies, the design of resource lessons, the design of teacher lessons, and finally, the evaluation of the project itself. In fact, the issues addressed read like the major points which Walker outlined. That is, the issues addressed were:

1. the nature of the principles used to connect facts of assumptions--in the case of the Urban Consumer Education Project, rights and responsibilities was the underlying schema for the curriculum points. The resource visits also reinforced the rights and responsibilities theme, and
2. the relation to psychological theories was implicit throughout but was articulated in practice by providing a few basic, concrete themes--i.e. a consumer has legal redress for grievances and can attain the redress in certain ways. The idea that children learn best by

doing concrete, practical activities was also a constant theme of the project. Teacher inservice also had a relation to psychological theory insofar as the plan for teacher inservice stressed primarily the rights and responsibilities theme. The teacher was taught to operationalize those themes at the classroom level through a series of games, activities and lessons which the teachers were taught to present at a concrete level for easy understanding by the children.

Operating from these principles, it was possible for the Project coordinator and/or interested others to look at the project on a day-to-day basis for "cues" to the success or failure of the curriculum design and curriculum implementation. In these endeavors, the primary question was supplied by the theme of the project "What is the goodness of fit of this lesson just written (or just taught) to the overall theme of rights and responsibilities?" Thus, the goals of the project--to teach consumer concepts within a rights and responsibilities framework were clearly defined. Equally well defined were the roles of the resource person who acted on behalf of the community agencies.

In our view, the adoption of a rights and responsibilities point of view for the curriculum had several important outcomes. First it allowed the project directors to create a consistent, coherent curriculum. By defining Consumer Education in terms of a set of consumer rights and responsibilities, the project was able to focus exclusively on consumer issues. Thus the fuzziness and overlap which often exists among consumer, career, and economic education (see Clow, MacDowell and Royer, 1980) was avoided by clarifying and defining the range of the consumer concepts to be discussed in the Project and restricting that range to topics under the rights and responsibilities umbrella.

In addition to enhancing curriculum clarity, the adoption of a point of view contributed a focus to the teacher and resource persons' inservice. Clow et al. cite the lack of teacher competence with consumer education concepts as a major stumbling block to effective program implementation. In our view, this stumbling block was eliminated by the focus of the project--narrow enough for repetition of the basic ideas to increase clarity and broad enough to provide for many varied lessons different aspects on consumer rights and responsibilities. Thus the delimiting provided teachers with a stable, coherent curriculum framework within which to begin their teaching.

In the same vein, the fact that the resource persons' lessons focused on the same basic curriculum issues as the teachers made it possible for the teachers to extend and strengthen their understanding of consumer rights and responsibilities. This is an important point because many projects which use classroom visitors treat those visitors as supplementary instructors, rather than as complementary instructors. Often there is no curriculum coherency from one set of visitors to another and both teachers and pupils wind up with a fragmentary view of the topic.

This unity of conception had important ramifications for the improvement of the project. For example, when a project teacher was observed and his/her lesson was judged not to be going well, it was a relatively easy matter to organize the post-lesson critique around how well the teacher was able to communicate the basic idea of the lesson--the rights and responsibilities of consumers. All the director's efforts could be directed toward clarification of those basic concepts as part of the overall improvement of the lesson.

Similarly, when a resource person's lesson was judged not to be on target, the critique of the lesson could also be directed toward the goodness of fit

of the lesson vis-a-vis the rights and responsibilities issues. Thus the lesson could be critiqued for its clarity on presenting rights and responsibilities and on the practicality for the consumer of the specific consumer rights and responsibilities discussed.

Assessment of the program's impact was also facilitated by recourse to the rights and responsibilities theme. As just mentioned both teachers and resource persons were critiqued around issues like:

1. the clarity of presentation of the rights and responsibilities theme germane to their lesson
2. appropriateness of the level of concreteness/abstractness of the chosen rights and responsibilities theme for the group.
3. organization of the lesson around the theme--i.e. did the lesson digress significantly from the theme? were extraneous ideas, concepts introduced?

The impact of the program on participating teachers and students was easily assessed under the rights and responsibilities umbrella, too. By writing a test based on the rights and responsibilities concepts stressed in the curriculum, it was possible to point out exactly which curriculum units both teachers and students did not understand. This, of course, then led the project personnel directly back to that unit to see whether (a) the lesson was unclear or (b) the lesson had not been implemented or had been implemented inadequately.

In our view, evaluation of the Urban Consumer Education Project steered clear of the usual practices associated with first year projects--the bodycount. Evaluators often measure first year results in terms of the number of participants, assuming that the project will not have had clearly defined goals during the first year and hence, there will be little conceptual organization to some or all of the project's activities. Many first year evaluations limit themselves to the number of activities conducted and/or the number of clients reached--but deeper measures (how much students and teachers learned, how well

the curriculum was implemented, etc.) would have to be deferred until the project found out where it was going. The Urban Consumer Education Project was a step ahead in that they did have goals clearly defined and activities devised which related to the conceptual framework and a program of teacher training which was oriented to that framework.

In describing curriculum change, Shaw (1975) has cited three characteristics of the educational establishment:

- . problematic preferences
- . an unclear technology
- . fluid participation

all of which confound implementation.

We saw evidence of all three in the Urban Consumer Education Project, but... not to the extent expected. For example, we saw problematic preferences exhibited by both teachers and resource persons who wanted to discuss career education related concepts (how to get a job in public transportation) instead of consumer issues. We saw unclear technology when teachers and resource persons failed to make role-playing work as a central means of allowing pupils to show what they knew and how they knew it. We saw fluid participation when both teachers and resource persons "wandered out" of the project from time to time--i.e. stopped teaching lessons for a period of time.

We believe that the incidences of all behaviors was far less than the problems encountered in many new projects--and we hypothesize that the reason for the relative infrequency of the behaviors is attributable to the fact that the curriculum was understandable to the project teacher. In all instances, we hypothesized that the reasons for the behaviors were rooted in the lack of a clear cut understanding of what the project was all about. For the most part,

redefining the curriculum in terms of the rights and responsibilities theme seemed to serve as a refocusing for the participants.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

After working on the project for a year or two, both the project director and the project evaluator, independent of one another, arrived at a definition of their activities vis-a-vis the project. They found that they had been independently operating from a belief system discussed by Eisner (1975)-- evaluation as a form of connoisseurship. One facet in particular was applicable-- "the critic" as midwife to perception. Discussing our related supervisor/evaluator roles we found that each of us had been directing our energies toward helping others in the project to see what needed to be done and what could be done.

We also found ourselves reflecting on a part of Eisner's argument which was implicit but important. Connoisseurship only occurs when you know what to do and when you have a standard against which to measure what you want to do--in other words when you have a point of view.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Berman, Paul. et al. Federal Programs Supporting Change.
Vol 1-8, Santa Monica, Ca., Rand Corp., 1975.

Clow, J., et al. How are career, consumer, and economics education related?
Educational Leadership. 1980, 518-522.

Eisner, E. The perceptive eye: toward the reformation of educational
evaluation. Invited address, Division B, Curriculum and Objectives,
American Educational, Research Association, Washington, D.C., 1975.

Shaw, K. in Case Studies in Curriculum Change: Great Britain and the United
States. ed. Wm. Reid and D. Walker. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1975.

Walker, Decker. in Case Studies in Curriculum Change: Great Britain and the
United States. ed. Wm. Reid and D. Walker. London, Routledge and
Kegan Paul, 1975.